

Major Lighthouses of Queensland

PART II

by

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Dent Island and Cape Cleveland

Dent Island is one of the group of islands that form the western edge of the Whitsunday Passage, and lies in latitude 20° 22' south and 148° 56' east.

About one hundred and thirty-five miles to the north of Dent Island and commanding the southern entrance to Cleveland Bay and the port of Townsville is Cape Cleveland.¹

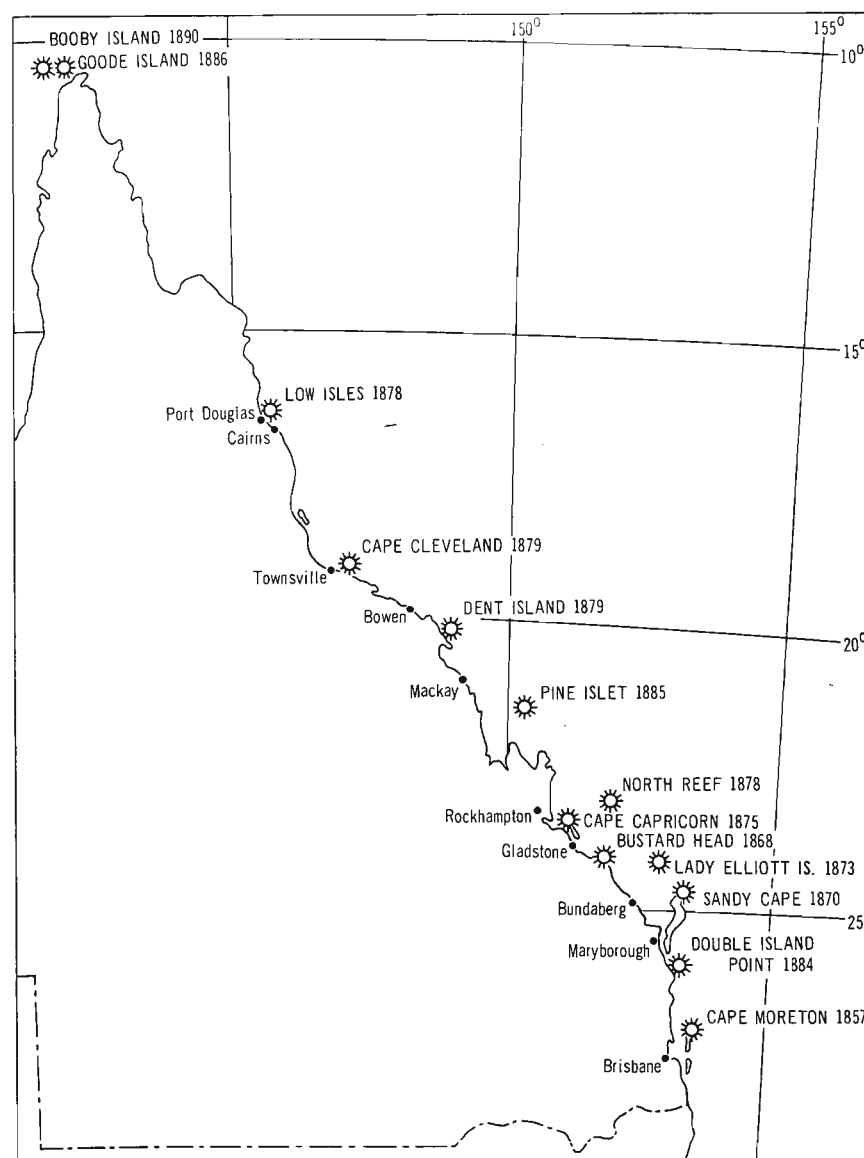
It was apparently decided to consider the construction and erection of lighthouses at Dent Island and Cape Cleveland simultaneously. Possibly the knowledge that monies were still available in the Loan Vote 1877-78 prompted Commander Heath to write to the Colonial Treasurer on 20 February 1878 to request that

... the Colonial Architect may be instructed to prepare plans & specifications and call for tenders for a Lighthouse at Cape Cleveland & on Dent Island Whitsunday passage. The towers to be the same size as that at Flat Top Island but with a trunkway in the centre for the clockwork weights to travel up & down as at Lady Elliotts' Island.

With each of the Light houses two cottages will be required for the keepers —²

The letter was re-directed to the Minister for Works and the Under Secretary Edward Deighton forwarded it to the Colonial Architect noting it "... for plans etc.". Early in April, F. D. G. Stanley the Colonial Architect was able to advise that the plans for the lighthouses at Cape Cleveland and Dent Island would shortly be complete. At the same time he reminded the Under Secretary that the iron sheeting for the outside of the towers was by custom ordered by the Government from England and supplied to the contractor. This was in order to secure the use of a "proper quality" as it was not normally procurable in the Colonial Market. As an example of regard for the economies then being practised in the colony he drew attention to the fact that a quantity of the "No. 10 gauge" iron, imported but not required for the Low Island tower was still held by Messrs Wakefield. He recommended that, as there was sufficient for both the towers being planned, the government should secure the iron which would be available at the same cost as if imported specially — £35 per ton — and would save six months in time. The Under Secretary, Treasury was fully in agreement noting the Memo "Action as suggested".

On 9 May 1878 the Department of Public Works called for tenders for the erection of lighthouses on Dent Island and Cape Cleveland.³ By the closing date, 14 June, three tenders for each of the proposed lighthouses with their two ancillary keeper's and assistant keeper's cottages had been received. In each instant that of W. P. Clark was the lowest, being £1820 for Dent Island and £1670 for Cape Cleveland. Accordingly his tenders carried the recommendation of the Colonial Architect, F. D. G. Stanley on referral to the Secretary for Public Works. The recommendations were submitted to the Executive Council on 27 June and approval was given for the acceptance of Clark's tenders and that they be charged to Loan Vote 1877-78 "Lighthouses Whitsunday Passage and Cape Cleveland". Public notice of acceptance of the tenders was gazetted on 29 June 1878.⁴ The Crown Solicitor was immediately instructed to



Queensland, showing major lighthouses and years of completion of lighthouses.

... be good enough to cause the necessary Bonds to be prepared for signature by the contractors.⁵

Although the Memorandum of Agreement was drawn up and returned two days later it was not until 31 July that Clark was advised personally of the acceptance of his tenders and requested to call to sign the Bond and make the usual deposit of ten per cent retention money.⁶ Another month elapsed before the sum of £349 was deposited as retention money and the Memorandum of Agreement was eventually signed on 28 August.

In the latter half of the year the Colonial Architect visited North Queensland and on his return on 9 December said of the two lighthouses.



Dent Island Lighthouse

Cape Cleveland Lighthouse

With the Foreman of Works I made a special visit to this spot, examined the ground, and fixed upon sites for the Lighthouse and Cottages. The framing up of these buildings is now far advanced.

Dent Island

Having arranged for detention of the "Victoria" S.S. for two hours in passing through Whitsunday Passage—I landed with the Contractor and with considerable difficulty reached the top of this island and found a suitable spot for the Lighthouse, commanding the Channel both to North and South, also a level site for Cottages.

The work is now in progress, the buildings being framed up in Brisbane.⁷

According to his Memorandum of Agreement Clark agreed to complete the lighthouses and cottages on Cape Cleveland and Dent Island within seven and eight months respectively of the acceptance of the tenders. One might perhaps agree with the view that the acceptance of the tenders did not actually become a legal contract until the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement by the two parties on 28 August. If so, then the buildings should have been completed by the end of March and April 1879 respectively. However without acknowledging that anything untoward had occurred to cause a delay Commander Heath commented on 26 June.

In Whitsunday Passage, the contractor has commenced the erection of the lighthouse and cottages at Dent Island. This light will be similar to that on Lady Elliot's Island, but with quicker revolutions. The work will be finished, probably, in about two months.

...

The lighthouse and cottages for Cape Cleveland are already framed, and have just left Brisbane. The light will be of the same character as that on Dent Island. The illuminating apparatus for both lighthouses are at the Port Office ready for shipment.⁸

Only two months later on 28 August 1879, exactly a year to the day after signing the Memorandum of Agreement and apparently entirely unexpectedly W. P. Clark wrote to the Secretary of Works to advise that through unforeseen circumstances he was unable to complete his contract. He let it be known that he had transferred his interest to John Clark and James Wiseman who were then at Cape Cleveland and Dent Island respectively and who would carry on and complete the work under the style or title of Clark and Wiseman.

The Colonial Architect was immediately notified that no money was to be paid on the contract until further advice. Despite this injunction a mere ten days later Stanley certified that the contract for the erection of the lighthouse at Dent Island had been satisfactorily completed and that as a consequence the Deposit Money could be returned to the contractor. Clark and Wiseman attached this certificate to their letter of 15 September in which they claimed the Deposit of £182 made on account of the Dent Island contract.

However two days before receiving the above letter P. MacPherson, Solicitor for Mr Jas. Campbell of the City Lime and Cement Stores, Creek Street had been in contact with the Secretary for Public Works. He advised them that his client had recovered Judgment for the amount of £567.19.2 exclusive of costs on William Peter Clark's committal of an act of insolvency under the Insolvency Act of 1874. MacPherson, on behalf of his client requested directions to be given that would prevent the Defendant from dealing with contracts held by him with the Department of Works that would prejudice his client's interests or defeat the result of his action.

The matter was then referred to the Crown Solicitor for his advice as to what action should be taken. His advice was quite simple; he stated that he was not aware that any action was necessary. If the transferees carried out the contract he thought they were entitled to payment. However the government made no moves that would possibly commit it to any set course of action.

The Insolvency Petition of James Campbell against William Peter Clark came before Mr Justice Lutwyche in the Supreme Court of Queensland on 26 September 1879. Upon reading the application an Order of Court was made appointing James Campbell the Receiver of the estate under litigation. The following day MacPherson forwarded a copy of the Order of Court to the Minister of Works and in his covering letter said that Campbell, in order to avoid causing the Department any inconvenience was prepared if necessary to undertake the supervision and completion of any contract held by William Peter Clark.

No action appears to have been taken by either party at this juncture and the status quo was maintained.

On 19 November the matter of the Insolvency Petition again came before the Supreme Court and after hearing the solicitors for the two parties, by mutual consent the injunction granted on 25 September and the Court Order of 26 September appointing a receiver were set aside and discharged. Some explanation of this is offered in a letter that Campbell addressed to Stanley on 20 November. He stated that while he had previously agreed to relinquish all claims on Clark's lighthouse contracts as soon as he had been paid his "Law expenses re Clark. viz. £400", and this had in fact been done on 14 November he believed that a letter had been sent advising the government of the position. The £400 that Campbell apparently settled for was made available by John Burns and John Woodburn jointly and in consideration of this Clark authorised them "...to receive and take all moneys due or to become due to me in respect of my two revenue contracts for the building of lighthouses for the Queensland Government at Dent Island and Cape Cleveland...". There is no mention of his earlier transfer of his interests to Clark and Wiseman and as there is no record of his rescinding this transfer one can only speculate as to where legal entitlement actually lay. The government were prepared to recognise the later transfer of interests to Woodburn and Burns. Upon application by them for the return of the deposit on account of Dent Island lighthouse and supported by Clark the sum of £182 was paid to their account with the Queensland National Bank on 28 November 1879. This lighthouse had been completed, not immediately prior to that, but almost three months previously for it will be recalled that Stanley certified to its satisfactory completion on 10 September.

Work apparently was pushed ahead to complete the second of the pair now freed from the legal imbroglio. On 29 December the Colonial Architect was able to advise the Under Secretary for Works that the Lighthouse at Cape Cleveland had been completed according to the plans and specifications and to the satisfaction of his office. The deposit money could now be returned. Clark must have by this time cleared his indebtedness to his creditors including Woodburn and Burns for they advised the government that they would be obliged if the Cape Cleveland deposit money together with interest were paid to W. P. Clark.

Thus, after taking almost twice as long as specified in the contract, were completed the small and simple structures that were the lighthouses at Dent Island and Cape Cleveland.⁹

* * * *

Following the spate of lighthouse construction during the five years between 1875 and 1879 when five major lighthouses were erected along the Queensland coast the next five years saw nothing of consequence established. This was despite the fact that in 1864 the Parliamentary Select Committee had recommended Double Island Point as a desirable place to erect a lighthouse. Similarly the Intercolonial Conference in 1873 recommended among others "...a first order light at Booby Island...".

The period of comparative stagnation between 1880 and 1884 was not the result of any lessening of concern by the Portmaster for the lighting of the Coast of Queensland although he had twelve months leave of absence during 1880 during which year he returned to England.¹⁰

* * * *

*Double Island Point*¹¹ and *Pine Islet*¹²

The lighthouses for these two points will be considered together, tenders for their construction being called together and the same tenderer being awarded both contracts.

The first hint about proposed new lighthouses for the Queensland coast came in the Report of the Portmaster dated 26 July 1881.¹³ No specific point was mentioned but only the vague "...neighbourhood of the Percy Islands". Substance was accorded the hint when ten days later he wrote

A Lighthouse at Double Island Point of course would be a great convenience but there are other positions on the Coast where one is more required, for instance at the Pine Islets near the Percy Group. In standing across for these Islands at night vessels pass through a tidal stream running across their course at a rate varying from nil to three knots.

The cost of a light like Cape Capricorn would be about £3500 & annually about £500. If a light like that at Dent Island, first cost about £2200 and annually £350. The latter would do but would not be so efficient...¹⁴

Nothing resulted from this letter or from another on the same subject written about a year later on 24 July 1882 and he again aired the matter for parliament in his Report dated 18 August 1882.¹⁵ In this he argued that with a long coast line, as trade increased so do more points require to be marked, and specifically urged a light for Double Island Point.¹⁶ Again the claim of Pine Islet was pressed with a need for a good revolving light.

Towards the end of January 1883 Heath left Brisbane to examine the site for the lighthouse on Double Island Point and on his return in early February reported to the Colonial Treasurer.¹⁷ In essence he explained that contrary to appearances, the site half way up the headland as proposed for a 4th Order light would not suffice having an insufficiently wide outlook to both Northward and Southward. Only the top of the headland would be satisfactory but being so elevated and the horizon consequently so distant a 4th Order light would be inefficient. He therefore recommended the substitution of a 3rd Order light for that originally proposed. An additional

sum of about £1000 would be required for this purpose. His proposal for the 3rd Order light was approved by the Colonial Treasurer.

This latter report together with his plea to Parliament may have been responsible for initiating those moves that resulted, during the next few months, in the preparation of plans and specifications prior to the calling of tenders.¹⁸ By the closing date, 23 June 1883, five tenders had been received and of these, three covered the two lighthouses and their respective cottages. These three ranged in cost from £6,900 to £7,600 and the time for completion ranged from 12 to 16 months.

Commander Heath recommended the lowest of the tenders, that of W. P. Clark for an amount of £6,900, the work to be completed in 12 months. The Colonial Treasurer agreed and his proposal received the approval of the Executive Council at its meeting on 28 June 1883.¹⁹

Later that year Heath reported that

Contracts have been taken for the erection of lighthouses on Double Island Point and the Pine Islets. The former will be a 3rd-order revolving light shewing flashes at $\frac{1}{2}$ minute intervals, and the latter a 2nd-order fixed and flashing.²⁰

The Memorandum of Agreement was drawn up and forwarded to the Under Secretary, Treasury on 10 July but was apparently not executed by the contractor until six months later.²¹ Construction would then have commenced early in 1884. But it was not until some months later that Heath must have become aware that nothing had been done to obtain Executive Council assent for the extra expenditure that would be involved in increasing the power of the Double Island Point Light. This was despite the approval accorded by the Colonial Treasurer on 9 February 1883 to his recommendation for this increase of power. He had therefore to write again on 5 July referring to his earlier letter and the reply received sanctioned the change proposed.²² In the eighteen month interval the estimate of the extra expenditure had risen to £1600 but approval was obtained on 18 July 1884 to charge the amount to "Unforeseen Expenditure" until provision was made in the Estimates in Chief for 1884-5.²³

Although Clark had obtained the contract for the construction of the lighthouses at Double Island Point and Pine Islet he apparently concentrated his efforts toward the completion of the former first. It was, it would seem, with some apparent gratification that Commander Heath noted the completion of the Double Island Point Lighthouse in a Report dated 14 October 1884.²⁴ He had visited the lighthouse in early September and said that though the headland was somewhat difficult to get at, being fifteen miles from Inskip Point, and the landing seldom good it well repaid a visit. He had seen everything in good order and properly adjusted and was of the opinion that the erection of the lighthouse and cottages for the keepers had been very satisfactorily carried out by W. P. Clark who had successfully erected a number of the other coast lighthouses. The light was obtained from a powerful petroleum burner which Heath believed would be found very efficient, and this commenced operation on the evening of 11 September 1884.²⁵

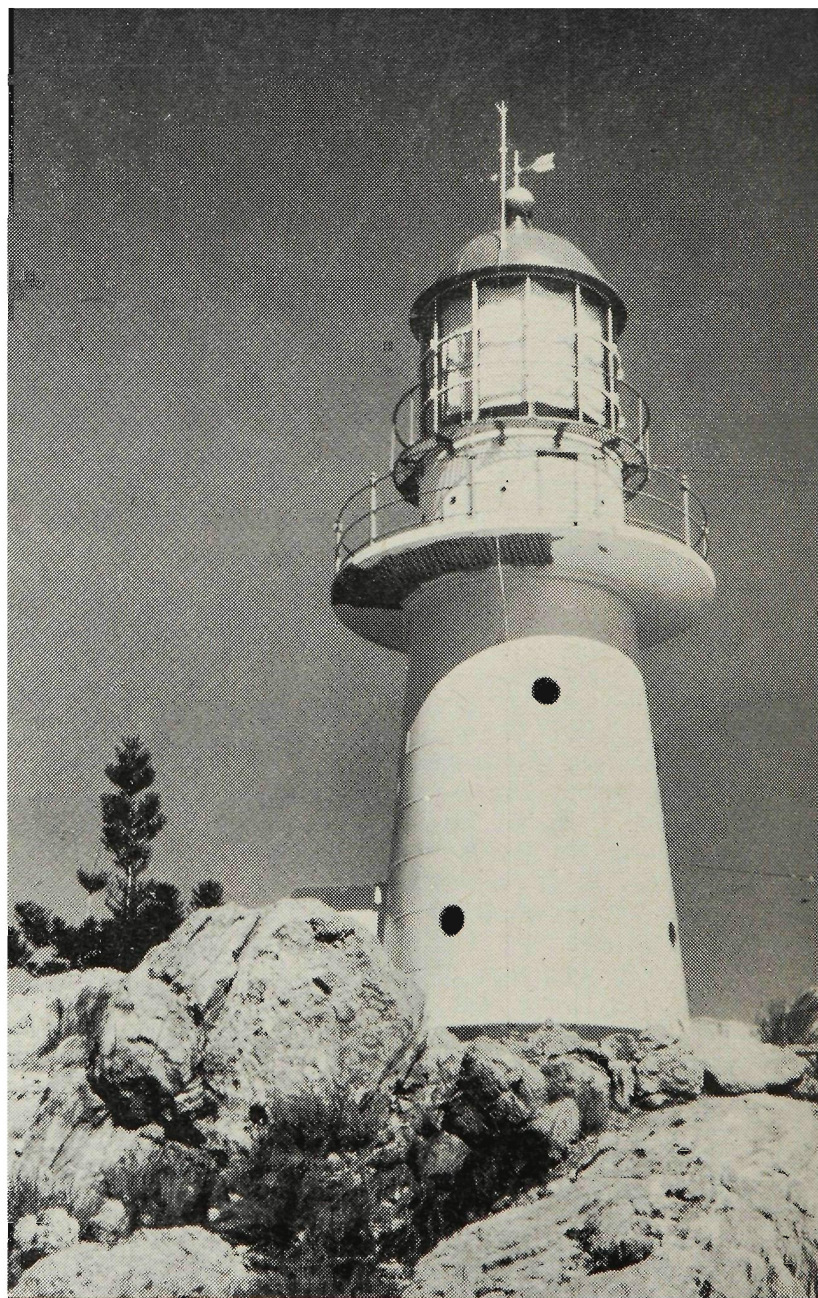
Heath's comments on Clark are of some interest resulting as they must from one of two standpoints. Either an official glossing over of the difficulties and delays caused through the, albeit temporary as it turned out, insolvency of Clark approximately five years previously while he was holding contracts for the Dent Island and Cape Cleveland Lighthouses or, the general overall workmanship and relative speed of completion of all the contracts he had previously held more than offset other factors such as that above. Certainly by 1884 he had without doubt acquired more experience in the construction and erection of lighthouses than any other contractor. If one includes the most recently completed, Double Island Point, Clark had been

responsible for five of the nine lighthouses built since 1859. It is, then, most likely that the latter proposition would have more influence.

Following the completion of the lighthouse at Double Island Point the contractor, W. P. Clark was enabled to concentrate on that for Pine Islet. Contrary to any impression that may have been given some work had been done on this, the second of his two items on a joint contract. Writing on 14 October 1884 at the same time as he reported the completion of the Double Island Point lighthouse Commander Heath could say

The buildings for the lighthouse at the Pine Islets are all ready for erection, and the illuminating apparatus is in Brisbane.²⁶

In July he had had cause to request a further appropriation of £500 to complete the lighthouse at Pine Islets, and received approval for this in the same month.²⁷ Work apparently proceeded smoothly and without interruption and while on his regular inspectorial visit to the ports and lighthouses of the colony Heath was able to telegraph the Colonial Treasurer on 18 July 1885 to advise of the completion of the Pine Islet



Pine Islet Lighthouse

Lighthouse.²⁸ Upon his return to Brisbane he prepared and submitted on 13 August a report to the Colonial Treasurer. Here he confirmed that he had visited the recently completed lighthouse at Pine Islet the work having been carried out most satisfactorily by the contractor. He, Heath, had fixed the red shade for marking the direction of the Normanby Rock, adjusted the apparatus and had seen the lamp lit before leaving. The glare of the light from Pine Islet was still visible five miles after the light itself had dipped below the horizon.

This in itself is not surprising when it is realized that the second most powerful of lights had been installed and at a comparatively high point.²⁹

Goode Island

Goode Island is one of the numerous islands a little to the west of the Torres Straits between Cape York and New Guinea.³⁰ According to Robert Logan Jack it was named by Mathew Flinders after the gardener of his 1802 expedition, a Peter Good.³¹ In time it apparently acquired the final 'e' which it still retains today. Interestingly the first call for a light to be erected on the island came not from Commander Heath as one might have expected but from a group of pearl fishers operating in the vicinity who on 14 July 1882 memorialized the Colonial Secretary. As it was the Colonial Treasurer who was the minister responsible for the Department of Ports and Harbours it was to him that the memorial was referred on 26 July.³² Heath was requested to report on the matter but there is no evidence that a report was prepared. However in the following month in his annual Report further to drawing attention to the fact of the colony's long coastline and the necessity to mark more points as trade increased he went on to say

In Torres Straits a good position light is required at Goode Island to point out the position of the entrance to Normanby Sound and the Prince of Wales Channel. This light could be attended to by the signalman stationed on the island.³³

Whether prompted by these two pleas or not an arrangement was apparently made with the Signalman on the island to display a temporary light.

A bright light is shown from sunset to sunrise from the verandah of the Signalman's cottage on Goode Island. It is about 250 feet above sea level, and is visible over an arc from NE by E round by North to WSW, to a distance of 8 or 9 miles, in fine weather.³⁴

As this information did not appear in Pugh's *Almanac* for 1883 it may be assumed that the arrangement for the light was not completed until sometime during that year. Nevertheless, true to form, Commander Heath lost no time in calling for the replacement of the temporary light by a more powerful apparatus. Undeterred by lack of enthusiasm on this occasion on the part of the Treasury he pleaded again in 1884 for a more powerful and suitable apparatus for Goode Island.³⁵ Mention has been made previously of "Sailing Directions"; that section, self explanatory in title, that was regularly contributed by the Port Master to the yearly editions of Pugh's *Almanac*. As an illustration of his hope (vain though it proved to be) in the above matter he wrote in the 1885 edition to the effect that the temporary light would be replaced during that year.

For the first time in about thirteen years the itinerary of his regular northern tour of inspection took Commander Heath as far north as Thursday Island. In his report on the trip dated 24 September 1886, he said that he had visited the sites for the new pilot station at Goode Island and had fixed upon that near Mr Steven's station in preference to the site at Quoin Point as the latter was much too exposed and had a bad approach from the Sound.³⁶ He added that the material for the buildings for the pilot station and the cottage for the new

signal station and the lighthouse, were in transit to Goode Island. According to Heath

The new station and lighthouse will be on a more conspicuous hill of considerably greater elevation and with a better outlook.³⁷

From what has previously been reported by Heath it would perhaps be not incorrect to assume that outside contractors were in this instance dispensed with in the construction of the buildings for Goode Island. Certainly there is no evidence in the form of *Gazette* notices for the calling of tenders and their subsequent acceptance which would refute the above assumption. The Goode Island lighthouse was the first and only lighthouse, among the thirteen at present under consideration, that was wholly constructed and erected by the Queensland Government without recourse to private building contractors. It was however a comparatively small building, being only 18 feet high, without doubt of wooden construction in contrast to the Sandy Cape Tower which was of cast iron and stood 99 feet high. The lighting apparatus itself would have been fairly simple to install in that the light was only a 4th order dioptric light and fixed rather than revolving.

Writing on 30 July 1887 Commander Heath said, among other matters,

At Port Kennedy the pilot buildings have been erected by this Department, and also the new signal station and lighthouse erected on the highest hill upon Goode Island at an elevation of 346 feet. The apparatus is of the 4th order with a totally reflecting glass mirror.³⁸

The Goode Island lighthouse would have been completed at some time between September 1886 and July 1887. As the buildings had been prefabricated and despatched by the earlier date and their erection was all that was required, it is more than likely that they were completed late in 1886.

Booby Island

Booby Island like Goode Island lies in the Torres Straits.³⁹ In the first half of the nineteenth century Booby Island was known to seafaring men as a refuge or house of call where a letter-box and visitor's book were kept. Ships provisions were also kept there in case of emergency.

Interestingly enough it was apparently named twice, and coincidentally with the same name by Captains Cook and Bligh. The latter writing in the late eighteenth century describing his voyage after the famous mutiny through the Torres Straits in 1789 said

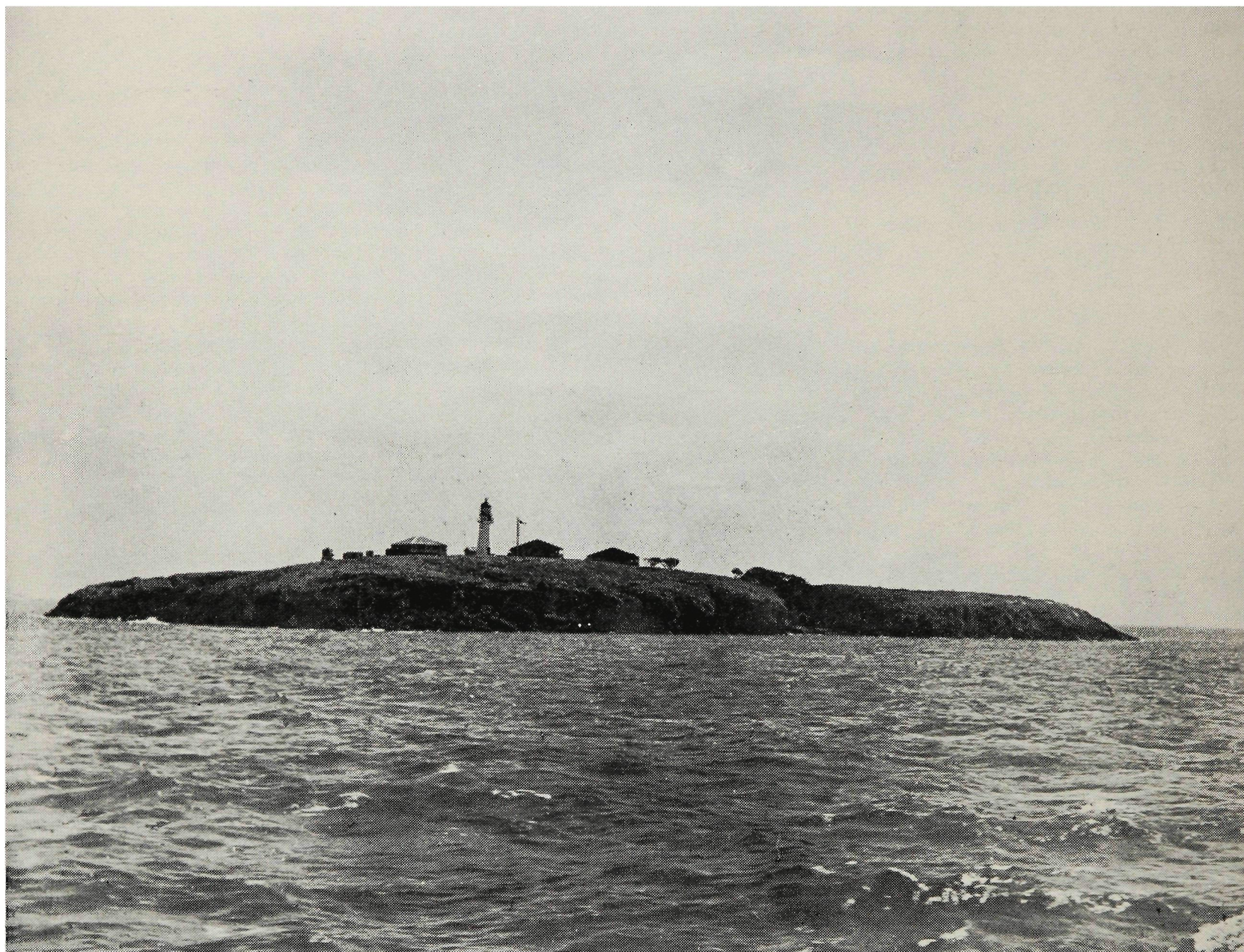
... A small island was seen bearing W., at which we arrived before dark, and found that it was only a rock, where boobies resort, for which reason I called it Booby Island.⁴⁰

and added further

I find that Booby Island was seen by Captain Cook, and by a remarkable co-incidence of ideas received from him the same name.⁴¹

It has been pointed out that in 1873 the Intercolonial Conference recommended the construction of a light at Booby Island. Despite this recommendation with the backing of all the colonies in Australia the light on this island was the last of the major lights to be erected along the Queensland coast. It was completed in 1890.

For twelve years after Booby Island was mentioned as a necessary site for a lighthouse the idea remained dormant. For one reason or another no one was disposed to say or do anything that would reactivate the matter. In the earliest days shipping traffic through the Torres Straits was undoubtedly small and the light dues that would have been collected would not have compensated for the cost of a lighthouse. Not until 13 August 1885 did Commander Heath apparently consider it worthwhile to mention Booby Island.⁴²



Booby Island Lighthouse

Here he was constrained to draw attention to the increased trade to the Gulf and the new line of traffic that had been opened out westward of Prince of Wales Island. As a consequence of this and having due regard for the safety of the vessels engaged in the trade he considered a light was now required on Booby Island. According to Commander Heath the light should not be less than one of the 3rd order, the cost of erection including the cottages for the light keepers being about £6,500.

The Portmaster apparently thought it was opportune to follow up his plea by writing further on Booby Island a mere three months later, on 30 November 1885. In essence he reiterates his earlier plea again stressing the development of the Gulf trade and the dangers that were present to shipping in the Straits. In concluding he said

...The apparatus for this position, should be of the 2nd order revolving, similar to that recently erected at the Pine Islets. The cost of the apparatus & lantern, which will have to be ordered from England, will be about £2,300.

The buildings in connection with this establishment will cost about £4,000.⁴³

A point of interest is the fact that in the interim of three months the Portmaster on reconsideration felt that the light should be a more powerful one and hence in his letter he called for a 2nd order light rather than the 3rd order mentioned in his report.

The light for Goode Island had not then been ordered from England and Heath was of the opinion that if the government determined upon a 2nd order light for Booby Island then the 4th order light for Goode Island as originally intended could be ordered immediately. As there was a sufficient amount available in the Loan Vote for "Other Lights" he could send the order for Booby Island light as well as that for Goode Island.

The Colonial Treasurer, the Hon. J. R. Dickson, wanted to know if the whole cost of the proposed lighthouse and apparatus would be covered by the balance of Loan Vote available for "Other Lights". However on Heath's advice that the £2,300 would only cover apparatus and light room the Colonial Treasurer signified his approval for the ordering of the lighting apparatus through the Agent General and noted that the cost of the building would be provided in the Estimates for 1886-7. Commander Heath was officially advised of the Minister's

approval and was told that the Indent would be forwarded on receipt of particulars.⁴⁴ These were supplied on 11 January 1886.

... [For Booby Island]

One 2nd order revolving apparatus, giving flashes at one minute intervals. To be adjusted to an elevation of 120 feet, with lantern & light room complete, but without the stanchions & rails for the balcony. The main smoke tube to be 4 inches in diameter, to be fitted with 3 - 3 wick & 2 - 4 wick burners, & to have spare shafts, journals & gearing for the two quickest movements of the clockwork. [£2300]

For Goode Island, one fixed 4th order apparatus, to illuminate an arc of 180°, & to be fitted with totally reflecting glass mirrors. The lamp to be fitted with three burners & spare reservoir & tubing. The burners to be fitted with 2 wicks, & without the central dispersers, to be fitted with Farquhars chimneys, & the level of the oil to stand at a distance of two inches below the top of the burner. The apparatus to be adjusted to an elevation of 250 feet. ...⁴⁵

During 1886 the Portmaster again travelled as far as the Torres Straits on his tour of inspection. He visited Booby Island and examined the different landings and the site for the lighthouse, the apparatus having been ordered from England.⁴⁶ It may be assumed that the advice regarding the provision of funds in the Estimates for 1886/7 for the Booby Island lighthouse was the *raison d'être* of his visit to the island. Nevertheless in his report prepared after the tour of inspection just mentioned he listed a second-order light on Booby Island as an additional light that was still more or less necessary on the coast.⁴⁷ A guess that these remarks signified a failure on the part of the government to allocate funds for this purpose would be correct. Confirmation was accorded this supposition when writing during the following year Heath reported

The apparatus for the light at Booby Island is still lying in the store in Brisbane waiting for funds to erect the buildings.⁴⁸

Still no response was elicited from the government but undeterred Commander Heath again took the opportunity in his annual report of 10 October 1888 to publicly draw attention to the fact that the lantern and apparatus for the Booby Island lighthouse had been stored for two years.⁴⁹

At last a move was made for early in 1889 tenders were called from persons willing to contract for the erection of a lighthouse and cottages on Booby Island.⁵⁰ The tenders came before the Executive Council on 29 May 1889 and they approved the acceptance of an offer from T. Gibson for the sum of £2913.⁵¹

One might have hoped that this would have been the signal for rapid completion of a project that had been talked about on and off for sixteen years. Such was not, however, to be the case.

Apparently the Colonial Treasurer in seeking Executive Council approval had declined to put forward Heath's recommended tender and instead substituted his own choice. After so many years in the business of dealing with tenderers one might have expected that Heath's judgment would have been respected. As it turned out, Gibson, the choice of the Colonial Treasurer, was awarded the contract and then declined to take it up on the plea that he had omitted to include the cost of freight. This was reported by the Portmaster in a letter of 20 June 1889.⁵² He went on to say

The next lowest tenderers Messrs Beal and Legg (one of whom I reported as having left the Colony for England, & the remaining partner as being reported by the Harbor Master at Thursday Island, as hardly competent to carry out the work) after endeavouring for the last fortnight to

get pecuniary assistance has failed in doing so, I have now therefore to repeat my recommendation of the 9th Ultimo, that the tender of Mr J. Meise be accepted.

and concluded by saying that as so much time had been lost he was of the opinion that it would be impossible to complete the work that season. On this occasion his opinion was respected and on 3 July 1889 the Executive Council accepted the tender of J. O. Meise for the sum of £3300.

Ironically Commander Heath's personally recommended tenderer now declined to take up the contract. His reasons, as Heath stated in a letter of 18 July 1889, were the lapse of time since his original tender and the nearness of the rainy season.⁵³ In the same letter the tender of J. and J. Rooney for £3329 was recommended for acceptance and at their meeting on 24 July 1889 the Executive Council acceded to the recommendation.

After so many delays had occurred it must have been with a sigh of relief and thankfulness that Heath reported on 10 September 1889 that the contract for the tower and buildings for the Booby Island lighthouse had been taken by Messrs Rooney, the firm who successfully erected the Sandy Cape lighthouse.⁵⁴ Although the contractors quoted eight months for completion of the project from date of acceptance of the tender it actually took about twelve months. In his report for the year 1890-91 the newly appointed Portmaster wrote on 26 August 1891

This light was exhibited for the first time on the 24th of June, 1890, and has worked with great regularity. All the work about the lighthouse and station generally is of a substantial and satisfactory character.⁵⁵

* * * *

Archibald Archer, the Colonial Treasurer at the time wrote on 12 May 1883

... I doubt if any young country can be pointed out which has in the same number of years expended so much money for the purpose of securing the safe navigation of its coast as has Queensland for the navigation inside the Barrier Reef, ... Last year an Act was passed abolishing light dues altogether, and vessels, whether calling for commercial purposes or distress, have the advantage of our coast as well as harbour lights free ...⁵⁶

By 1890 with the addition of a further four major lighthouses along the coast the views expressed by Archer as above were reinforced and were even more appropriate.

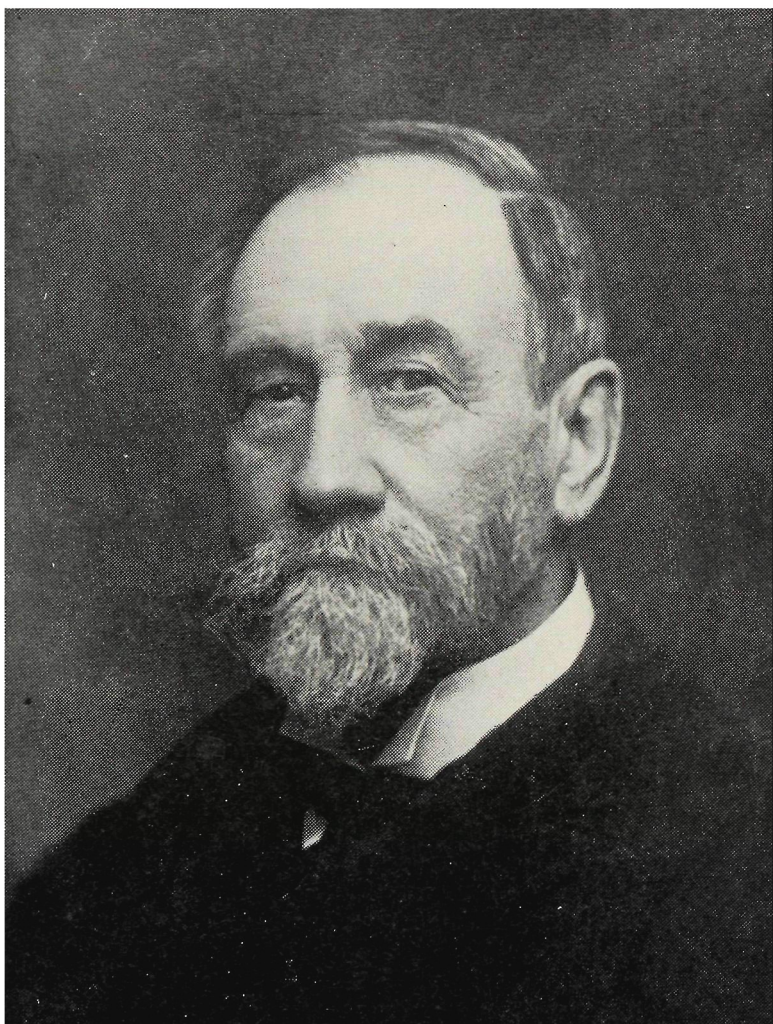
When the Booby Island lighthouse was completed in mid-1890, within a period of about thirty years the government of Queensland had achieved the enviable position of having its coast adequately and satisfactorily lit with thirteen major lighthouses together with innumerable lesser lights and beacons as aids to navigation.

* * * *

Tribute should be paid to Commander George Poynter Heath who was Portmaster from 13 January 1862 until 30 June 1890. He has been the central character in this story, in fact one might say he is the axis about whom the whole story revolves.

He was a man of quite unusual foresight in realising the present and future navigational needs of the colony. Besides being an apparently capable administrator of his sub-department he had a practical knowledge of the lighting systems in use in all the lighthouses he had had constructed along the Queensland coast. In almost every case he was present at the original setting up of the apparatus in the light rooms and made alterations and repairs where necessary on his periodic visits.

In late 1879 he applied for twelve months leave of absence to visit England for the benefit of his health and that of his family and to arrange some of his private affairs and this was



COMMANDER GEORGE POYNTER HEATH

approved by the Executive Council at its meeting on 19 November 1879.⁵⁷ He was granted full pay while he was on leave.

His salary on appointment as Portmaster was £400 plus a Surveying allowance of £280 per year. From May 1869 this latter allowance was reduced to £200 but in 1874 his total overall salary was raised to £700. No further alterations or increases were made and this remained the salary of the Portmaster until he retired in 1890. Not until 1 July 1882 was any salary or allowance made to the Chairman of the Marine Board and then £100 was voted as salary. Thus as Heath held the two appointments he would be drawing, after 1882, the annual salary of £800. At the same time he was entitled to the half pay of a retired Royal Navy Commander which was 7/- per day.

His health could not have been good and undoubtedly his exertions as a government employee did not assist. About nine years after his return from leave of absence, in a long letter of 23 November 1889 Commander Heath sought on medical advice a further twelve months leave with a view to retiring at its expiration. In the course of this letter he broadly traced the moves of his twenty-eight years connection with the Department of Harbours and Rivers as Portmaster and Chairman of the Marine Board. To realise the growth of the colony in that time it will not be inappropriate to note some of the points made by Heath.

...in 62 there were five ports open—there are now eighteen...

...the Inner Route has been marked for a distance of 450 miles...

...there was only one light house on the coast, viz. that at Cape Moreton; now there are thirty-four besides six lightships and 150 smaller lights...

He went on to say that he was somewhat at a disadvantage as the general public knew and cared nothing about the aids to navigation as long as they were landed safely at their destination. Few knew enough about the subject to appreciate them.

He himself to a great extent had prepared the present Navigation Act and the Port Dues Provision Act and had been responsible for twenty years for the general superintendence of the carrying out of the provisions of those Acts. He also had laid down the principles of the Oyster Act of 1874 which formed the basis of the present Acts and had had the general supervision of the working of the Oyster and Fisheries Acts. He added that he had never made use of the press as many others had done to keep their claims before the public and in conclusion said

...but after so many years service and after having injured my health by so long an attention to the constant and incessant claims of the Dept. I think I have some claim to the favourable consideration of the Govt. if not in the shape in which I have applied for it, yet in some equivalent form that...will allow me to feel that my...services are not to be passed over without some official recognition.⁵⁸

This request of Commander Heath would appear, and certainly in the light of the supporting evidence, to be a reasonable request. However a brusque reply informed him that it would be taken into consideration by the Government early in the next year.

In February of 1890 after requesting from Commander Heath a medical certificate to support his request he was verbally advised that the Government intended to grant him only three months leave prior to retirement.

Heath made certain claims in a subsequent letter of 10 February 1890, and these, if true, indicated the existence of a distinct personal bias against him. He pointed out that W. D. Nisbet who was the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers after only fourteen years service was granted a year's leave on full pay and two years after his return a second year's leave on full pay to allow him to retire. [Incidentally Nisbet received a salary of £1200.] There were a number of other cases of the same sort according to Heath who went on to say

I would point out that under the "Civil Service Act of 1863" I have a claim to a months leave for every year of service. Except when I went to England, I never had any leave during the thirty years except once for a fortnight when I had to go to Sydney on business, so that even if I had twelve months given me now, I should have given to the public service several months time which I had a claim to use for change and recreation.

He asked only that he should be treated as other officers of his standing who have had great responsibility. What he asked for was only some slight recognition but the withholding of that recognition was on the other hand a "pointed public slight". He called on the Government to reconsider his case and to relieve him of the "stigma" that they proposed to place on him.⁵⁹

Even Robert Ferguson who was the Clerk of Works at the Sandy Cape lighthouse on a salary of £250 received a bonus of £100 upon completion of the lighthouse for "capable and special service". Later upon his retirement from government service in 1885 having reached the position of Superintendent of State School Buildings with a salary of £500 per year, he was granted

...in consideration of his faithful service of twenty one years, a retiring allowance to the extent of twelve months' pay (£500).⁶⁰

Commander Heath was informed officially on 6 March 1890 of the government's intention to adhere to its earlier decision, which had been verbally conveyed to him during the previous month.

Despite the attitude of the government the *Courier-Mail* eulogised him on his leaving the Department on 31 March. The esteem of his staff may be suggested by its presentation to him of a solid silver tea service together with a pair of silver fruit stands and candle sticks. In responding to the address Commander Heath said that the gift was

...substantial evidence of your generous appreciation of the manner in which for so many years I have performed my duties as head of this department...

It will leave a deep impression...that one's life has not been spent in vain, and whether you have attained the amount of success you anticipated or not, you have endeavoured to do your duty, and that your endeavours have been appreciated by those with whom you have served...⁶¹

So closed a not uneventful chapter in Queensland's history when the colony entered the maritime navigational field and in association with the other colonies created conditions that underwrote the safety of shipping.

APPENDIX

Expenses incurred in establishing lighthouses and valuations made prior to assumption of Control by the Commonwealth of Australia.¹

| Date of Erection | Lighthouse | Capital Cost of Buildings (a) | Cost of Optical Apparatus | Area of Land | Valuation at 1 July 1915 |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | | £ | £ | Acres | £ |
| 1857 | Cape Moreton | 15,232 (b) | — | 450 | 5,278 (c) |
| 1868 | Bustard Head | 4,835 Est. | 2,124 | Whole Island 1100 | 4,267 |
| 1870 | Sandy Cape | 12,000 | 3,000 | 640 | 6,364 |
| 1873 | Lady Elliott Island | 1,820 | 263 | Whole Island | 261 |
| 1875 | Cape Capricorn | 3,938 | 1,295 | 120 | 870 |
| 1878 | North Reef | 9,208 | 2,359 | 10 | 3,239 |
| 1878 | Low Isles | 4,090 | 1,389 | 50 | 1,575 |
| 1879 | Dent Island | 2,558 | 592 | 400 | 1,027 |
| 1879 | Cape Cleveland | 2,635 | 514 | 50 | 995 |
| 1884 | Double Island Point | 3,556 | 1,533 | 200 | 2,285 |
| 1885 | Pine Islet | 4,540 | 2,345 | Whole Island | 3,451 |
| 1886 | Goode Island | 2,406 | 165 | 60 100 | 763 |
| 1890 | Booby Island | 4,244 | 2,321 | Whole Island 15 | 3,424 |

1. Statistics are drawn from papers relating to transference of property to the Commonwealth Government. [Q.S.A. WOR/108].

(a) Buildings includes Tower and Quarters for Keepers.

(b) Total Capital Cost includes Optical Apparatus.

(c) Valuation includes Yellow Patch and North Point Hummock lights.

REFERENCES

- Latitude 19° 11' south and longitude 147° 1' east.
- All correspondence referred to in relation to Dent Island and Cape Cleveland lighthouses unless otherwise stated [Q.S.A. WOR/A268 In-letter 4484 of 1890].
- Queensland Government Gazette*, January - June 1878, p. 1103.
- Gazette*, January - June 1878, p. 1512.
- Letter 2870 dated 29 June 1878, [Q.S.A. WOR/G23, p. 870.]
- Letter 3083 dated 31 July 1878, [Q.S.A. WOR/G24, p. 157.]

- In-letter 6178 of 1878, [Q.S.A. WOR/A158].
- Report of the Department of Ports and Harbours. *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1879, Vol. II, p. 912.
- Commander Heath described them as follows—

Light on Dent Island.—A revolving Dioptric light, of the 4th order, is placed on the western side of Dent Island, about 8 cables from its southern extremity. The light stands at an elevation of 120 feet above high-water mark, and attains its greatest brilliancy every thirty seconds.

It is visible from the Anchor Islands, West about, until shut in to the northwards by Cid Island, and can be seen from a distance of 16 miles.

The tower which is circular, is painted white, and is 33 feet in height.

Cape Cleveland Light.—On the extremity of Cape Cleveland, and at an elevation of 210 feet, is placed a 4th order revolving light. The intervals of revolution are 20 seconds. The white light is visible some 20 miles. The light shows red through an arc of about 16 degrees, the centre of which is in line with the Salamander Reef. Vessels from the southward, after passing through the red sector will, while the white light is in sight, be clear of that danger. The tower is painted white, and is 35 feet in height.

['Sailing Directions' compiled by P. G. Heath in Pugh's *Almanac*, 1880, pp. 247 and 276].

- His letter of 12 November 1879 claimed that after twenty years in the colony his health and that of his family required a change as well as the fact that private affairs required his presence in England. He concluded by saying that with the many changes and improvements taking place at home such a visit could not but prove advantageous to the Department and added pessimistically "...should I be spared to return".

[Letter attached to Minute 2 of Minutes of Executive Council of 19 November 1879 referred to the Colonial Treasurer. Q.S.A. TRE/E58].

- Latitude 25° 56' south and longitude 153° 13' east.
- Latitude 21° 39' south and longitude 150° 14' east.
- Report of the Portmaster on the Ports and Harbours of Queensland. [V. and P., 1881, Vol. II, p. 881].
- In-letter 2254 of 1881, [Q.S.A. TRE/A24].
- Report of the Portmaster on the Department of Ports and Harbours of Queensland. [V. and P., 1882, Vol. II, p. 1072].
- Note the change of emphasis from that expressed on 4 August 1881. See note 14.
- In-letter 424 of 1883 with Minute 5 of Minutes of the Executive Council of 18 July 1884 referred to the Colonial Treasurer. [Q.S.A. TRE/E77].
- Tenders were called on 17 May 1883 to close on 23 June 1883. [Gazette, January to June 1883, p. 1369].
- Minute K2, Minutes of the Executive Council referred to the Colonial Treasurer. [Q.S.A. TRE/E73].
- Report of the Portmaster on the Department of Ports and Harbours of Queensland for the year 1882-3. [V. and P., 1883-4, p. 1818].
- See notation on letter of 9 July 1883 accompanying Clark's tender to the Crown Solicitor after being returned to Treasury. "These documents have been duly executed by the contractor 12/12/83". [In-letter 1534 of 1883, Q.S.A. TRE/A26].
- In-letter 2203 of 1884 with Minute 5 of Minutes of the Executive Council of 18 July 1884 referred to the Colonial Treasurer. [Q.S.A. TRE/E77].
- Minute 5 of Minutes of the Executive Council of 18 July 1884 referred to the Colonial Treasurer. [Q.S.A. TRE/E77].
- Report on Harbours and Lighthouses. [V. and P., 1884, Vol. III, p. 793].
- Light on Double Island Point*.—A revolving light is now exhibited from the highest part of Double Island Point, at an elevation of 315 feet above the sea. The apparatus is of the 3rd Order, holophotal, dioptric, and the light, which is visible from a distance of 24 miles attains its greatest brilliancy at intervals of 30 seconds. ['Sailing Directions', Pugh's *Almanac*, 1885, p. 245].
- V. and P., 1884, Vol. III, p. 794.
- Executive Minute P of 18 July 1884. [Q.S.A. 91/72].
- Q.S.A. TRE/B17, fol. 61.
- Pine Island Lighthouse*.—A second order fixed and flashing light is exhibited from the S.W. summit of the Pine Islets. The tower from which the light is shown is about 45 feet in height, circular and painted stone colour. The light is fixed for an interval of one minute, then a short eclipse, followed by a bright flash and another; the flash and two eclipses occupying together one minute. The light stands at an elevation of about 230 feet above the sea, and is visible about 21 miles. A beam of Red Light is thrown from the lighthouse over the position of the Normanby Rock. ['Sailing Directions', Pugh's *Almanac*, 1886, p. 308].
- Latitude 10° 34' south and longitude 142° 9' east.
- Robert Logan Jack, *Northmost Australia* Vol. 1. Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co. Ltd. London 1921. Ch. XVIII, p. 132.
- Q.S.A. TRE/B14, fol. 88.

33. *V. and P.*, 1882, Vol. II, p. 1072.
34. "Sailing Directions" in Pugh's *Almanac*, 1884, p. 262.
35. Report of the Portmaster on the Department of Ports and Harbours of Queensland for the year 1882-3. This is dated 8 November 1883. [*V. and P.*, 1883-4, p. 1818]
and
Report on Harbours and Lighthouses dated 14 October 1884 [*V. and P.*, 1884, Vol. III, p. 796].
36. Report on Harbours and Lighthouses.
V. and P., 1886, Vol. III, p. 607.
37. *V. and P.*, 1886, Vol. III, p. 608.
38. Report on Harbours and Lighthouses.
V. and P., 1887, Vol. IV, p. 13.
39. Latitude 10° 36' south and longitude 141° 55' east.
40. Bligh as quoted in Robert Logan Jack, *Northmost Australia*, Vol. 1, Ch. XIII, p. 103.
41. On 23 August 1770 see Robert Logan Jack, *Northmost Australia*, Vol. 1, Ch. XI, p. 88.
42. Report on Harbours and Lighthouses.
V. and P., 1885, Vol. III, p. 408.
43. In-letter 4307 of 1885 with 140 of 1886.
[Q.S.A. TRE/A32].
44. Letter 1836 dated 18 December 1885.
[Q.S.A. TRE/G5, p. 224].
45. In-letter 140 of 1886.
[Q.S.A. TRE/A32].
46. Report on Harbours and Lighthouses dated 24 September 1886.
[*V. and P.*, 1886, Vol. III, p. 608].
47. *V. and P.*, 1886, Vol. III, p. 609.
48. Report on Harbours and Lighthouses dated 30 July 1887.
[*V. and P.*, 1887, Vol. IV, p. 13].
49. Report on Harbours and Lighthouses.
[*V. and P.*, 1888, Vol. III, p. 698].
50. *Gazette*, January to April, 1889, p. 1000.
51. Minute W² of 29 May 1889.
[Q.S.A. 91/128].
52. In-letter 2204 with Copy of Minute of Proceedings of the Executive Council on 3 July 1889 referred to the Colonial Treasurer.
[Q.S.A. TRE/E99].
53. In-letter 2528 with Copy of Minute of Proceedings of the Executive Council on 24 July 1889 referred to the Colonial Treasurer.
[Q.S.A. TRE/E99].
54. Report on Harbours and Lighthouses.
[*V. and P.*, 1889, Vol. III, p. 835].
55. Report on the Department of Ports and Harbours for the year 1890-91.
[*V. and P.*, 1891, Vol. IV, p. 522].
56. Letter to Colonial Secretary published with The Survey of the Queensland Coast (Correspondence respecting the continuation of)
[*V. and P.*, 1884, Vol. III, p. 797].
57. In-letter 2359 of 1879 with Copy of Minute of Proceedings of the Executive Council on 19 November 1879 referred to the Colonial Treasurer.
[Q.S.A. TRE/E58].
58. In-letter 3982 of 1889 with 592 of 1890 attached to Copy of Minute of Proceedings of the Executive Council on 5 March 1890.
[Q.S.A. TRE/E101].
59. In-letter 592 of 1890. See Note 58 above.
60. Minute H of Minutes of Proceedings of the Executive Council on 3 January 1885.
[Q.S.A. 91/76].
61. Commander Heath as quoted in the *Brisbane Courier*, 3 April 1890, p. 6.

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